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## THE PRINCIPLE OF BALANCE

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Each of the elements in society intellectually qualified to lead has not only its special interest—which it may try to advance at the expense of other interests—but it has also its special point of view, which it always strives to make prevail. It may be above greed, it may be above the lust for power, but it will never be above the craving for influence. Each element, then, pushes its influence as far as it can and is checked only by the spirit of independence or by the influence of some other element.

Each class or profession which attracts to itself many of the talented of each generation is quite sure that, if only society would submit to its guidance, all would be well. Yet the simple truth is that no one element is wise enough to be followed without question. The trouble is not any lack of ability, but the bias to which it is subject by reason of its *esprit de corps* or its distinctive work and manner of life. In spite of itself its judgment becomes warped by its special psychology. When, however, the leadership of society is shared among the various important elements, their special habits of thought neutralize one another, and the resultant is on the whole reasonable.

The only certain means of demonstrating the existence in each element of a bias which unfits it for unqualified leadership in society is to show what has actually happened when some element has gained such ascendancy that it has been able to mold society, as it were, to its heart's desire. Of course no element has ever ruled without check from any quarter, but there are instances which reveal clearly enough the tendencies which lurk in each of the groups that has, one time or another, set its stamp upon the social mind.

### THE RULE OF THE DEAD

The *dead* count as a social element, for their recorded experience and transmitted institutions may be stalwart factors in the life of

their descendants. When the living acknowledge an initial presumption in favor of whatever has survived from the past, yet preserve toward it a scrutinizing critical attitude, the generations are in proper balance. But when present reason is held weaker than that of some golden or classical age and the living are powerless to free themselves from the yoke of the past, we have *the rule of the dead*.

One fetter of such enslavement is fear of offending the spirits of the departed; hence blind conservatism is especially strong wherever, as in the Far East, ancestor worship prevails. Another gyve is overvaluation of whatever is classic. For example, the premium the old state-examination system of China put upon the writings of certain thinkers who lived long before our era tended to shackle the original minds of each generation. The embryo Pasteur or Edison was so intimidated by the universal opinion that wisdom died with the ancient sages that he could bring forth nothing. Thus the social atmosphere lost the stimulating ozone it had in the old inspiring days when the Chinese invented gunpowder, block-printing, banknotes, porcelain, the compass, the compartment boat, and the taxicab.

Again, the living are paralyzed by the notion that some period or product of the far past is holy, that of yore the gods were nigher to men, that then they revealed their will through channels which have since become choked. Nearly every people reverse some ancient scripture or institution of such transcendent prestige that the living dare not doubt, or probe, or criticize it. No Arab today stands on a footing with the writer of the Koran; no Jew with the giver of the Mosaic Law; no Celestial with Confucius; no Parsee with Zoroaster. As for inherited institutions, we see two hundred millions of Hindus divided into three thousand hereditary castes, between which there is no marriage and very little social intercourse, and from which no man can escape. In taking over this terrible burden without inquiring into its authority or worth, the living become thralls to certain ideas and decisions of their far ancestors.

The only remedies for this bondage are to dispel the golden haze that hangs about the origins of religions and codes, to test myths and

legends in the crucible of scientific scholarship, to strip the remote past of its purple and to reveal it in everyday garb, to gain a true perspective of the development of civilization and human society, and to teach men that the Here is as sacred, the Now as inspired, as some spot in Western Asia twenty or thirty centuries ago.

The slavish following of musty precedents by courts of justice is another form of the rule of the dead; so is the allowing of donors to fix for all time the use to which their endowments shall be put. A written constitution, made so hard to amend as to deny succeeding generations the creative freedom enjoyed by the makers of the instrument, is also a yoke upon the living. Even if the best minds today are no match for the "Fathers" of the federal Constitution, it is certain that men of today can legislate for our needs better than the men of 1787 could suit *their* work to our needs.

The subjection of the living to the dead flouts what we know of life and society. Life is correspondence to environment, so that the stiffening of traditions and institutions is a kind of *rigor mortis*. The idea that sages should mark a groove for society for all time shatters on the fact that society ceaselessly changes. Finding itself in a plight unforeseen by its ancestors, a people casts about for an adjustment. Conservatives, who brand this as folly or sacrilege, deny society's sacred right of self-adaptation.

*The rule of the old* delays needful adaptation, although to a less degree than the rule of the dead. Generally a man has a rather full set of convictions by the age of thirty, so that to allow for developments occurring thereafter calls for a mental effort which few are willing to make. Hence, when the old men monopolize places and influence, readjustment lags at least a generation behind need. Then, too, timidity is likely to grow with age, so that the old lack the courage to start changes which they know are necessary.

#### MASCULINISM

While women, owing to their being largely occupied with bearing and rearing children, have developed fewer specialists than men, they ought to be conceded a large social influence in order to counteract certain bad masculine tendencies. The fighting instinct of the male sex seriously unfits it to take sole charge of society.

Many wars have no other cause, and if the policies of states obeyed the wills of men and women rather than of men only, the world would enjoy more peace. Male pugnacity kept in force long after its due time the hoary conception of government as mere keeper of the lists rather than as machinery for serving certain common needs. The slow transformation of government from coercion into service reflects in part the growing influence of women. Masculinized politics becomes a fight in which civic ends are lost sight of. Citizens allow themselves to be ranged into two parties, import into political discussion military phrases—"campaign," "battle," "the enemy," "chiefs," "war cries," "banners"—and military features—torchlight processions, uniforms, and marching companies. Acting on the maxim, "To the victors belong the spoils," the winning party proceeds, amid the general approval of the voters of both parties, to convert the rewards of government to private and party advantage.

By "business" a rational being understands the social system of making and distributing economic goods. That the claims of business should take precedence over life and limb, over health and family, is monstrous. Yet the fighting instinct leads thoughtless men generally to look upon it as a prize ring, with the implication, of course, that somebody is bound to get hurt. This is why good men long justified child labor, the wrecking of the health of working girls, the night work of women, preventable work accidents. Even yet many disinterested men feel that stopping the sale of diseased meat or "doctored" canned goods is unfair interference, like depriving prize fighters of their best blows and ruses. Women, on the contrary, insist, in their simplicity of mind, that the palming off of putridity and poison, under the guise of food, upon mothers buying nourishment for the children they have risked their lives to bring into the world is not in any sense *business*, but *black treachery*.

Male irrationality comes out again in the needless taking of chances. Reason labors continually to eliminate hazard, and all insurance rests on the human desire to substitute certainty for risk. Yet men who sweat for their money will gamble away their week's wage in an evening. No one, however, has ever seen working women regularly risk their wages on a card. Women have an

instinct for security and strive to lessen risk, while men fatuously create it. In gold-mining camps recklessness is habitual, and to save himself a little trouble the miner endangers the life he is toiling to enrich. After the arrival of wives men acquire a more rational view and learn to shun needless dangers.

Men nearly monopolize the consumption of alcohol and narcotics, even though many are well aware of the harm these do. Women, on the other hand, shrink from self-poisoning. In the slums the spread of heavy drinking among women is a sure sign of demoralization born of despair. In China the women never generally took to opium smoking till the district was hopeless. Doubtless woman's gain in social influence will make for a firmer dealing with race poisons. Again, women, with their better psychological insight, would hardly have been guilty of the follies men have committed in the penal field. One cannot imagine them treating juvenile offenders as if they were adult, expecting to make bad men good by solitary confinement, shutting up people who cannot pay their debts, imprisoning persons without any provision for feeding them, or settling cases by judicial combat. Only men are foolish enough to persist in applying pain to offenders without self-control, who manifestly can never be improved by punishment.

The state of women under masculine ascendancy may be seen in China. Man-made throughout, Chinese culture is full of male contempt for women. Thus double the ideograph for "woman" and you have "to wrangle"; triple it and the meaning is "intrigue." In Chinese thought the world is divided between good and evil, Yang and Yin. Darkness is "Yin," cold is "Yin," earth spirits are "Yin," and woman is "*Yin*." Although necessary, she is inferior and should be held under a firm control. The ancient sages stressed the danger of letting women become educated and go about freely, for thus might they gain the upper hand and wreck society.

A girl who remains for life unwed, her betrothed having died before their marriage, is deemed worthy of a memorial portal or *pailow*; but no *pailow* is raised to the youth who remains true to the memory of his lost sweetheart, for such constancy would be ridiculed. From the male point of view it is fitting that the woman be sacrificed to the man, but not that man, the superior being,

be sacrificed to woman. This is why some centuries ago the Chinese held that a widow ought to kill herself at her husband's funeral, whereas the notion that a widower ought to do the same at his wife's funeral never entered the Celestial mind. The unfaithful wife is stoned or drowned; but the worst that can happen to the unfaithful husband is a tongue lashing, which he is expected to hear patiently.

The boy's upbringing is not shaped to please the other sex, but everything in the upbringing of the girl—her foot binding, "tottering lily" gait, hairdressing, skill in embroidery, innocence, ignorance, obedience—is obviously a catering to the male. Again, the women of the classes for the most part pass their lives within four walls, away from the stimulus of street and public resort, and rarely go out save in a closed cart or a covered chair. They have few acquaintances, save relatives, and take no part in picnics, excursions, and feasts. Social diversion is organized for men, not for women. Toilet, opium smoking, gossiping with the servants, visits from a few friends—no wonder the doctors find their worst cases of nervous exhaustion among these repressed creatures!

How does the female sex fare under this masculine tutelage? Since the married daughter belongs completely to her husband's family and cannot be looked to by her parents in their old age, it is female infants that are done away with as superfluous, never male infants. The estimate of Chinese observers in 1910 was that from 5 to 10 per cent of girl babies were exposed.

Foot binding was a disability imposed by men, for until recently it was a rare father who would marry his son to a girl with natural feet. Mothers subjected their little daughters to the torturing bandages, because without the "golden lilies" they stood no chance whatever of marriage.

Chinese ladies are excessively small and frail in comparison with their men folk, owing no doubt to the foot binding and the confinement imposed by male opinion. They suffer much from neurasthenia and heart lesion, owing to the strain of their lot, and their faces are stamped with pain, patience, and gentle resignation rather than with happiness.

In the West suicide is from three to five times as frequent among men as among women, whereas among the Chinese the women kill

themselves from five to ten times as often as men. The slavery to mother-in-law, which drives many brides to suicide, and the ideas of wifely propriety that impel young widows to make away with themselves originated with men and have never been molded in the least by the sex they affect. Thus has masculinism conserved the happiness of women!

Moreover, the whole people are held back because men have dwarfed women to suit their own tastes and prejudices. Lacking psychology, the Chinese thinkers never recognized the rôle of the mother in shaping the character of her sons. China's great need is men of high integrity, and she cannot grow them so long as the impressible boyhood years are passed in the company of an unlettered, narrow-minded, neglected, and despised woman. Not one great man have the Chinese brought forth since they took to binding the feet and neglecting the education of their daughters.

#### CLERICALISM

The undue ascendancy of the religious profession gives rise to what may be termed "clericalism." A well-recruited clergy, keyed up by exacting moral and intellectual standards, renders valuable services, if it commands public confidence in a sufficient degree to exercise a qualified leadership in matters of faith and conduct. Always, however, the clergy should be balanced by other intellectual groups lest they rack the people with those austerities which regularly develop in an unchecked clerical class. It is not a question here of an unspiritual and self-seeking priesthood exploiting a credulous people. Our problem is, What will happen when an able, resolute, and well-organized clergy gains such an ascendancy that they are able to have their way with a people? The materials for answering this question are abundant. In seventeenth-century Spain, Scotland, and Massachusetts, in the Mexico, Peru, and Columbia of two generations ago, and in the Ireland, Quebec, and Russia of today may be read the tendencies that lurk in clerical control.

In case the religion encourages self-dedication, the influence of the clergy causes a larger number of persons to turn their backs on natural "worldly" aims and to give themselves to the religious life.



Coupled with the growth of endowments for religious purposes, this results in cramping economic development. Three centuries ago in Spain there existed upward of nine thousand monasteries, besides nunneries. One hundred clergy cared for the services in the Cathedral of Seville. In the diocese of Seville there were fourteen thousand chaplains; in Calabarra, eighteen thousand!

Growth in the number and richness of sanctuaries is a sure sign of the prevalence of the clerical view that such sacrifices are God-pleasing. In certain settlements of the foreign born in this country one comes upon a superb, stone, parish church in the open country, ten miles from town, while for miles about the farmhouses are poorer, meaner, and barer than those of the neighboring Americans. There is also a tendency to "enrich" the religious services and to multiply sacraments, thereby exalting the importance of the priests. When, as in the seventeenth-century Scotland, worship is not free to develop toward sacerdotalism, sermons become so long and so frequent as to absorb all leisure. At that time ministers would relieve one another in the pulpit. The same congregation would remain sometimes for ten hours together, and in a single Edinburgh church not less than thirty sermons were delivered every week.<sup>1</sup>

Where the clergy are unopposed, religion becomes a heavy tax on the people's time. In Mexico there are, counting Sundays, one hundred and thirty-one religious holidays in the year, and more than half the people observe them all. In Greece the holy days eat up nearly a third of the year, and in Russia not over two hundred and fifty days in the year are left for work. In Abyssinia religion once claimed about half the time. The Protestant Reformation

<sup>1</sup> Robert Baillie, Scotch Commissioner in London, wrote in a letter of May 17, 1694:

"This day was the best that I have seen since I came to England. . . . After D. Twisse had begun with a brief prayer, Mr. Marshall prayed large two hours, most divinely, confessing the sins of the members of the assembly, in a wonderful, pathetic, and prudent way. After, Mr. Arrowsmith preached an hour, then a psalm; thereafter, Mr. Vines prayed near two hours, and Mr. Seaman prayed near two hours, then a psalm; after, Mr. Henderson brought them to a sweet conference of the heart confessed in the assembly, and other seen faults to be remedied, and the conveniency to preach against all sects, especially Anabaptists and Antinomians. Dr. Twisse closed with a short prayer and blessing."

See Brooks Adams, *The Emancipation of Massachusetts*, pp. 5-6.

did away with most of the saints' days, but it developed an excessively burdensome observance of Sunday, so that the "Scotch Sabbath" and the "Puritan Sabbath" have become bywords for iron repression of the most innocent pastimes.

An enlightened clergy may banish many superstitions, yet foster certain ones which serve its aims. Even after priests or pastors cease to teach that the course of nature and of affairs is governed by a series of miracles known as "special Providences," and that health, security, and prosperity can be gained by prayers, fastings, or gifts, they encourage an abnormal solicitude for one's soul, leading to a morbid introspection and devotionism. The belief in a fixed natural order and the reign of law has come up in the last two hundred years, not by favor of the clergy, but in spite of them.

Great as are the services of higher religion in upholding conscience against impulse and self-interest, an ascendent spiritual class inevitably presents conduct in a false perspective. The traits which make for individual or community well-being—sobriety, truthfulness, fair dealing, helpfulness—are thrown into the shade by the religious qualities—devoutness, strict observance, church attendance and support. The offenses which grate most upon the theologians, such as heresy, blasphemy, scoffing, and neglect of "religious duties," are painted so black that lying, dishonesty, and violence look gray by comparison. The end may be a people austere and devout, but not truthful, loyal, and kindly.

Unopposed, theologians invariably bring their people under the ascetic yoke. The sacrifice of natural inclinations appeals strongly to those who have outgrown the burnt-offering notion of religion. Asia and mediaeval Europe bear the palm for self-inflicted bodily suffering to please God, but such exercises took little hold of their laity. For an instance of a whole people blighted by misconceived religion one must look to the Scotch of the seventeenth century.

Every profession strives to exalt itself, and the clergy are no exception. In the absence of lawyers, scholars, and other educated groups to puncture their overweening pretensions, ministers will insist that they are ambassadors of God, that their commands from the pulpit are binding, that sudden mysterious calamities will fall

upon scoffers, that Providence continually sets aside the laws of nature on their behalf, that prodigies and portents attend the death of the divine. They teach that it is dangerous to speak disrespectfully of a clergyman, to fail to salute him in passing, to cross him, or to sue him at law. The lives of eminent preachers written by their professional brethren abound in edifying stories designed to the end that clergymen be regarded with fear and awe.

Since the sacerdotal order rules by ideas, the maintenance of their influence prompts them to try to control the whole intellectual life of society. Under penalty of fine or imprisonment they force church attendance upon all. In order that the people might remain "pure," the Spanish clergy brought about the crushing of the Protestants and the expulsion of the Moors, while the Massachusetts theocracy persecuted Antinomians, Baptists, and Quakers. If they dare, the clergy censor the reading of their flock, curb the press, bar out "disturbing" foreign books, and maintain a regular "index" of condemned writings. Moreover, they are jealous of any education not under their own control. Intent on keeping their people dependent on them, they never push popular education themselves and put every obstacle in the way of its provision by the state. When they create schools of their own to compete with the public schools, the religious part of the curriculum quite overshadows the secular. While friendly to that higher learning which they can control and use, their suspicion of the increase of natural knowledge impels them to denounce free inquiry and the liberty of teaching.

In short, of all despotisms that of the priest is worst. Dictating to men in the name of God, he reduces both God and society to the measure of the priestly conceptions. While he rules, whatever he proclaims as God's will is entitled to unquestioning obedience. Out of their mundane experience or common sense his flock can draw nothing to oppose to his obscurantism or fanaticism. It is a despotism without check or limit.

#### MILITARISM

The undue ascendancy of the military profession gives rise to *militarism*. Such ascendancy is likely to occur when army and navy officers are drawn chiefly from a hereditary upper order, so

that their professional prestige is reinforced by class prestige. This affinity between the nobility and the army may be an inheritance from feudalism, or it may be the outcome of deliberately petting, pampering, and privileging the military in order to draw into it those able to contribute most to its spirit and prestige. At times the militarist bias in society is financed and promoted by concessionaires, battleship builders, and armament makers.

When the fighting caste gives public opinion its key, the pursuits of the soldier are esteemed nobler than those of the civilian. He is regarded, not as a killer, but as a hero ready to shed his blood for king and country. Proficiency in war is deemed the be-all and end-all of national organization and effort. All sound men are looked upon as potential soldiers; all sound women, as potential mothers of soldiers; national resources and productive power, as possible sinews of war. The health of the masses is conserved, not out of concern for their welfare, but to preserve their military fitness. The idea rules that the people exist, not to live out their lives, but to win wars. A little folk with no such cheering hope is despised as cumberer of the earth. Army and fleet are not watchdogs to protect the people in their peaceful pursuits, but the means of imposing the national will on lower races, of "organizing" backward peoples, or of fulfilling "cultural missions" to unwilling neighbors.

War is deemed, not a thing of dread, but "a biological necessity." Peace *within* the nation is priceless, but *between* nations it is "a dream and not even a beautiful dream." The resort to international violence is identified with the evolutionary "struggle for existence," and the losers of a war are branded as "unfit." During peace militarists demand ever heavier armament and longer training, heedless of the fact that other militarists are persuading their peoples to do the same, so that after the utmost sacrifices the relative positions of the rivals are unchanged. Each casts more and more upon the altar of the war god, yet is no whit safer than before.

In militarist philosophy the state is not for the individual, but the individual is for the state. The needs of the state are not the happiness of its citizens nor the advancement of mankind, but mystic goals, vaguely related to civilization, the super-race, destiny, or God. National self-conceit is sedulously fostered by

a pseudoethnology, a falsified history, and a systematic blackening of the character of rival peoples.

Militarism strangles liberal political development and strengthens revolutionary and imperialistic tendencies. It is fond of dynasties and scorns democracy. The relation of the officer to his men is the pattern for the relation of a government to its citizenry. The military chafe under civil authority, while they sneer at parliamentary debate as "mere talk." Since it is illogical to require the conscript to kill those he regards as defending their country, while not requiring of stay-at-homes the lesser sacrifice of keeping silent when they disapprove state policy, militarism calls for censorship of newspapers, suppression of public meetings, control of university professors and religious teachers, and the suppression of writers and speakers who criticize the war policy or take "the enemy point of view." In the name of patriotism it insists that the citizen-soldier relinquish every civil right and submit to cruel and degrading punishments without trial by jury for the smallest assertion of self-respect, not against discipline, but against insolence and class domination.

#### COMMERCIALISM

When traders, manufacturers, capitalists, and bankers wield the bâton, *commercialism* reigns. The recent extraordinary infatuation of Americans with this class suggests that such a tendency appears when the big economic tasks which press upon a young and growing country have lent extra importance to the business man, when business has attracted an overlarge share of national ability, and when the commercial spirit is held in check neither by aristocratic traditions nor by strongly organized liberal professions. Since the small business men take their cue from the great merchants, financiers, and heads of big enterprises, in an era of commercialism these, their spokesmen, become the leaders and tone-givers of society.

The tone they give reflects, of course, their characteristic habits of thought so far as these have not been qualified or neutralized by non-business influences. Now, one who is a business man and nothing else slips easily into the fallacy of ignoring non-economic goods and of rating well-being by dollar income. What he desiderates is *prosperity* rather than *welfare*. The only wealth that is real

to him is bankable wealth. Values that are not pecuniary values, such as *race vigor*, *public health*, *natural beauty*, *scientific progress*, *moral tone*, and *ideals of life*, he will sacrifice when they interfere with national or personal gain. His ideal is high wages, big salaries, and fat dividends, so that whatever stands in the way of maximizing these "hurts business" and is anathema. He cannot see that there are business profits which cost some of us ten times their worth in salubrity, or quiet, or peace of mind. Such a man is tender with poisonous smelter fumes, grade crossings, factory smoke, and noisy advertising, because he can realize the money cost of suppressing them, but not the harm they do.

So long as business men of this limited vision have their spell upon the public mind, "success" means the same as "business success"—that is, making money. A candidate's trump card is the promise of a "business" administration. The highest compliment that can be paid a philanthropic, religious, or educational scheme is to pronounce it "business-like"; whereas a man is insulted if you call his business "philanthropic," or "religious," or "educational." A school board must be a "business" board, scholars should be picked and officered by a business man as university president, and the ultimate control of churches, colleges, and charities is left to the solid men of business whose money makes these possible.

A business man's success in his undertakings may be roughly gauged by the money he has been able to make under the accepted codes, but the success of the divine, jurist, officer, statesman, scholar, thinker, artist, or poet is not properly measured by his gain. Nevertheless, under commercialism the money yardstick will be naïvely applied to achievement anywhere, with the result that alongside successful business men the head men in every line of intellectual or idealistic endeavor will look like dwarfs. As the public comes to feel this, cupidity will be sharpened and corruption will invade every type of structure in society.

Since in the eyes of a commercial-minded people money income is the only income, it idolizes those who line its pockets. Employers who pay the wages and salaries that keep many families are hailed as the chief public benefactors and are given whatever they ask. On the other hand, the surgeon who establishes a new

operation, the experimenter who finds the antidote for a deadly disease, the breeder whose discoveries in heredity open vistas of race improvement, the civilizer of a savage folk, the projector of a new education, the founder of a great social settlement—these are not “men who do things.” For they give blessings, mere blessings, but not money income!

The idea that it hurts society to disturb persons making money, just as it hurts the hive to disturb bees secreting wax, causes various elements of public good to be sacrificed out of a superstitious reverence for business. Nature’s stores are not conserved for posterity, lest opportunities for immediate profit be curtailed. The nation allows itself to become a polyglot hodgepodge, because mill-owners, mine operators, contractors, and railroads insist on an unlimited flow of cheap alien labor. Property is put above life, and lawmakers stay their hand when business men predict ruin if required to keep their work places safe and sanitary.

Government is looked upon, not as guardian of every great public interest, but as bulwark of property rights and maintainer of conditions favorable to making money. Its master-aim is business prosperity, on the theory, “Make employers content and they will make the people content.” Such government services as public health, conservation, education, recreation, and charities are starved in order to keep taxes low or to subsidize private enterprises; or else the prisons are run to make money for prison contractors; the parks, to enrich street-car companies; the schools, to provide employers with cheap youth, skilled at the public expense; the public-utilities commission, to make a market for issues of corporation securities.

The commercial fallacy befuddles society to the point of being no longer able to know its bad from its good. Interests plainly antisocial, such as the liquor traffic, race-track gambling, and commercialized prostitution, are spared on the ground that they are “businesses.” Then, too, the open vice shop “brings people to town.” A movement to clean up a rotten city government is deprecated as “hurting business.” Chicane is tolerated, if it is merely “the tricks of the trade.” A crime committed without malice and merely in the way of business is condoned. The people

are taught that speculation is not gambling, that tax dodging is not larceny, that railroad rebating is not treachery, that free transportation passes are not bribery, that deleterious adulteration is not murder. The large-scale malefactor of high finance goes unpunished because he is a "Napoleon," a "superman," "asserting the higher law which great enterprises have the right to command."

No people that is intelligent and free can long endure the unqualified ascendancy of the commercial element. Able and useful as business men are, their influence needs to be balanced by that of other groups. During the period 1890-1905 American opinion was led by commercial minds, and the results are writ large in the alarming growth of materialism and corruption throughout this period. Thanks to a sudden flood of light on the ways of big business (known as the "literature of exposure") other groups—the educators, the social workers, the economists, the geologists, and the physicians—have in recent years won the confidence of the public, while a much better type has replaced the specialized and unscrupulous business men who spoke for the American commercial class at the opening of the century.

#### LEISURE CLASS ASCENDANCY

As corrective of unwholesome tendencies the leadership of those who do not have to work for a living may be most salutary. Thus it may temper male ascendancy by diffusing that idealization of the feminine which grew up with mediaeval chivalry and gave birth to "lady" worship. Its love of pleasure may tend to counteract the morbid asceticism and "other-worldliness" which sometimes radiates from the clergy. Again, the leisured take the enjoyer's point of view rather than the trader's and check commercialism by insisting on valuing a thing or an activity by what it can add to life and not by what it will fetch.

But when the leisure class has the last word on everything, its influence may be very noxious. Exempt itself from labor, it makes leisure the cardinal index to superiority and meets all who would enter its charmed circle with the challenge: Do you work for a living? Out among the plain people, who, like Atlas, support the



world on their shoulders, runs like devil grass the fantastic idea that work is disgraceful, until millions, who have nothing to look forward to but the common lot, are set at odds with their bread and butter. This is well-nigh as bad as if evil djinns should persuade us to be ashamed of breathing or eating or any other necessary function. Not only do sensitive and aspiring workers come to hate their work, but, in order to avoid the ignominious thing, the shrewd crowd into shady occupations and invent numberless ways of "living by one's wits." At the threshold of the leisure class forms a corrupt half-world of *demi-mondaines*, procurers, on-hangers, gamblers, touts, charlatans, swindlers, bravos, "gentlemen of fortune," and other higher parasites, which, like an abscess, continually pours out infection. This is one reason for the moral rottenness which always develops in an aristocratic society.

It is the custom of leisure-class families to keep about them numerous servants ostensibly to render their masters personal service, but really to perform "vicarious leisure," to use Veblen's happy phrase. So there grows up among them a sense of the shamefulness of waiting on yourself, which spreads out from the leisure class and prompts people who can ill afford it to pay some menial to do for them things they could easily do for themselves. It is felt demeaning to clean your clothes, black your boots, carry your luggage, roll your baby carriage, answer your doorbell, wait on your table, groom your horses, or wash your car. In order to hire these things done for them, the middle class scrimp on necessities and have few children, while living is made dearer for all because too many workers abandon production in order to render superfluous services.

The prestige of a leisure class rests on conspicuous waste as well as on conspicuous leisure. At the social summit, to be sure, are some so sure of their place that they are free to lead a "simple" life, but in general the leisured develop a prodigal manner of life, which most of the useful people accept as the *only* proper way of living. They feel that nothing adorns like precious stones; nothing is beautiful unless made of costly materials; no raiment is fine but silk and broadcloth. There is nothing for furniture like rosewood and mahogany; for the palate, like champagne and

truffles; for pleasure, like a theater party or a meet with hounds. There is no society but the joint enjoyment of the expensive, no marriage save a church wedding, no rest save at a watering-place hotel. Thus foppish standards, begotten of spenders' rivalry, leach out through society and corrupt sound homebred notions of what is fit, or decent, or worth while. People come to scorn the joys at their elbow and pine for luxuries out of their reach. Ungratified worldliness gnaws at the heart of multitudes, while greed is whetted till even decent men turn to monopoly, extortion, chicane, and acquisitive crime.

When new-rich force their way into high society with a torrent of expenditure no social barriers can withstand, the effect on public morals is yet more disastrous. The spectacle of their baronial estates, princely houses, liveried lackeys, and Sybaritic luxury contaminates even hard-headed persons with wealth worship. People fall apart into as many exclusive social groups as there are styles of living and forget how to meet their fellow-men on the level. You are snob to those below and toady to those above you, so that the higher are cankered with pride, the lower with envy. If the working millions accept these values, they cease to respect themselves and will in the end let themselves be governed by the wealthy.

The influence of the leisure class fortifies the cultural studies in the schools against the demand for vocational studies and helps letters hold their place in the curriculum against the pressure from science. In adult recreation it belittles play in favor of sports involving skill. It is responsible for the feeling that conservatism is dignified, while radicalism is "vulgar" and "bad form." As we saw from the example of the English in Flanders, it leads to war being conducted by amateurs as a sport instead of by professionals as a lethal industry. While in earlier stages of social development the leisure class contributed many valuable elements to the culture of the people, it now performs no useful functions which cannot be better rendered by paid public servants at a tithe of the cost. In view of the sapping effect of its standards and examples upon the basic virtues of the self-supporting, organized society would be justified in so taxing great incomes as to make a hereditary leisure class impossible.

## LEADERS AND LED

A just balance, too, should be preserved between leaders and led. Let us designate as "intellectuals" those from whom leadership would naturally be expected, while the to-be-led may be called "the plain people." Now, it will be bad for society if at every fork in the road the intellectuals stride ahead along what they think is the right road, while the plain people follow them with a childlike trust. The matter is by no means so simple. The intellectuals should be willing to give reasons, while the plain people should keep their eyes open and use their common sense.

In American experience we find certain matters in which the intellectuals had the truth before the plain people, and the latter learned to see through their eyes. Such are the upholding of the public credit, the conservation of natural resources, the promotion of scientific research, civil service reform, appreciation of the expert in the public service, efficiency in government, the isolation of contagious diseases, public-health protection, compulsory vaccination, scientific charity, and eugenics. Vision in such matters calls for a fuller knowledge or a wider range of observation than the average uneducated person possesses.

There is another group of matters on which the plain people take a stand without needing the initiative of intellectuals. Such are what are termed "moral questions," i.e., questions which are answered out of one's moral perceptions rather than out of special knowledge. Of this type are the abolition of slavery and peonage, the suppression of prostitution and the liquor traffic, the humanization of punishments, the suppression of Mormon polygamy, the protection of the home, religious toleration, and international peace. Here the rôle of leaders has been to direct attention rather than to persuade.

In certain other matters the plain people took a stand long before the intellectuals were heard from. Thus the government regulation of railroads was an article of faith among farmers in the seventies, while it received the late and grudging acquiescence of professional and business men not earlier than the nineties. The prevention of industrial accidents, the prohibition of child labor, and the protection of working women were in the program of the

American labor unions for twenty years before it became respectable to support them. So has it been with homestead laws, rural credit, postal savings banks, the graduated income tax, the fight on the "Pinkerton" plague. The reason is that on these questions the farmers or the wage-earners drew upon an experience which the intellectuals utterly lacked. They knew where the shoe pinched, for they had to wear it. Moreover, the economic self-interest of the intellectuals, or of the classes they affiliate with, has in some cases been squarely against reform. If, then, the plain people had waited for the intellectuals to take notice of their grievances and to guide them to redress, they would have waited till the crack of doom.

There are cases in which intellectuals and plain people even disagreed, and the event proved the plain people to be right. The English working-class sympathy with the cause of the North during the American Civil War, in spite of the pro-Southern spirit of the leading class, is not recognized by the English themselves as political sagacity. The opposition of the plain people of the Pacific slope to Chinese coolie immigration, although our men of light and leading almost unanimously condemned such opposition, has since been justified by sociology. In these instances the instincts of the masses proved a more trustworthy guide than the half-baked cosmopolitanism of the intellectuals.

The balance to be struck between the educated and the people depends on a number of things: on the nature of the questions that come up, on the plane of popular intelligence, on the familiarity of the people with methods of public discussion and debate, on their experience in following argument, on their skill in detecting the demagogue, on the fulness of the control they exercise over their government, on the complexity of society, and on the nature of the education, the intellectual habits, and the disinterestedness of the elements that would lead the people.

#### CONCLUSION

In the piloting of society no valuable element should have either too little influence or too much influence. When a ganglion of gray matter is not left free to do well its proper work, or when it cannot

get a fair hearing for its good ideas and hence is not making to the intelligent guidance of the whole that contribution which it is capable of making, it has too little influence. When, on the other hand, it is so ascendent as to make all the rest the victim of its special psychology, it has too much influence. Thus we arrive at *the principle of balance*, which may be formulated as follows: *In the guidance of society each social element should share according to the intelligence and public spirit of its members, neither overshadowing other elements nor overshadowed by them.*